

04: Journey to Jerusalem

Notes for 23 Apr

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Background

Subject	Matt	Mark	Luke	John
Journey to Jerusalem	8:19-22		9:51-62	7:1-10

Discussion

The [Blue Letter Bible](#) (our nominal 'study guide') has captioned this set of texts as 'The Journey To Jerusalem'.

We are entering a somewhat 'bits and pieces' section of our story. All three scripture references for today are short and slightly disconnected from any broader narrative thread and from their immediate context. So, what do we make of them?

Luke 9:59-62 says some hard things - " But Jesus said to him, 'Let the dead bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.'" and "Jesus said to him, "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God"". What do you make of that? Often, this passage is interpreted by those who might be described as being on the [zealot wing](#) of Christianity as being a very clear call to arms. You have the permission of Jesus to ignore your local responsibilities because there's something much more important that needs doing.

- How would you respond to such a claim?
- Can you think of other statements of Jesus that would promote, for want of a better term, family responsibilities?
- "If you can keep your head when everyone around you are losing theirs, then you don't understand the seriousness of the situation" goes the old joke. Have we become complacent? Are we too comfortable? Do we much prefer the 'my burden is easy and my yoke is light' Jesus over 'let the dead bury the dead' Jesus?
- In a number of translations this passage from Luke, and its counterpart in Matthew, are entitled "Would-Be Followers of Jesus". Is that fair?

The story in John 7 is concerned with attending (or not) the [Sukkot](#), or Feast of Tabernacles, in Jerusalem. Those who could were commanded to journey to the Temple in Jerusalem for the seven days of the festival. Jesus makes the unusual decision not to go in a discussion with his brothers (an interesting aside in itself - one of the few references to Jesus' immediate family):

"My time is not yet here; for you any time will do. The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify that its works are evil. You go to the festival. I am not going up to this festival, because my time has not yet fully come." After he had said this, he stayed in Galilee.
John 7:6-9

But, then

However, after his brothers had left for the festival, he went also, not publicly, but in secret.
John 7:10

What's happening here? It's difficult to put yourself in someone else's shoes (particularly if that someone else is Jesus) but try: what calculation is he making? Reading on in John 7 we find that Jesus maintains a low profile - the people are asking "Where is he?" - until eventually, halfway through the festival, Jesus goes to the Temple courts and starts talking.

- Why the subterfuge? Why say "I'm not going" to his family and then go anyway?
- Jesus says nothing for 3 days or so ("halfway through the festival"). Again, try and put yourself in his shoes... what is happening here? Why the delay in getting started with teaching? Is there a lesson here in 'context-sensitive' evangelism?

Resources

- ["What Is the Festival of Tabernacles – Sukkot?"](#) from the IFCJ (the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews).